DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 289 009 CE 049 051

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TITLE Development of Linkage Models for Cooperative Planning & Service Delivery to Adult Education Handbook.

INSTITUTION Austin Community Coll., Tex.
SPONS AGENCY Texas Education Agency, Austin. Div. of Adult and Community Education Programs.
PUB DATE 87
GRANT 77320210
NOTE 25p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Basic Education; *Cooperative Programs; High School Equivalency Programs; *Human Services; *Models; Program Development; Program Implementation; *Public Agencies; *Social Agencies

ABSTRACT

This guide for administrators provides a model for linking adult basic education (ABE) programs--ABE, general educational development (GED), and English as a second language (ESL)--with a broad range of human service agencies. The linkage model depicts a process that is divided into three phases. Three chapters discuss in detail these phases. Chapter 1 on the decision phase concerns these functions: establish communications, develop agency interest, obtain agency decision, and identify needs. Chapter 2 on implementation addresses agreement development, curriculum development and identification of method of instruction, teacher recruitment and orientation, and program implementation. Chapter 3 on the evaluation phase discusses evaluation of student performance and program administration and provision of feedback to agency administration, ABE coordinator, and teacher. An appendix provides a guide to linkage agencies. (YLB)

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DEVELOPMENT OF LINKAGE MODELS
FOR
COOPERATIVE PLANNING & SERVICE DELIVERY
TO ADULT EDUCATION
HANDBOOK

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CE 049051

A special project funded by the Adult and Community Education Division of the Texas Education Agency, in pursuant to a grant (77320210) July 1, 1986 - June 30, 1987. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the Texas Education Agency and no official endorsement by the Texas Education Agency should be inferred.

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PREFACE

This handbook is designed to be a guide for ABE administrators interested in expanding their programs to serve social service organizations within their community. It discusses various aspects of linkage and attempts to focus on key issues. Insight for this discussion was provided by ABE administrators who have implemented similar programs and from literature describing linkage projects in other states.

The handbook was kept brief to facilitate its use. It is intended to help administrators focus their thinking and translate their concepts into action. It is not intended to be an exhaustive study of the subject.

Suggestions for improving this manual are welcomed and may be submitted to Austin Community College, Adult Basic Education Department.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Development of this manual was facilitated by the professional knowledge, keen insight, patience and skill of several individuals.

The advisory committee members who contributed their experience are: Jim Morgan, John Redd, Linda Gibbs, Nana Rylander and Maggie Cunningham.

Dr. Adriana Barrera read the initial draft and provided invaluable comments and editorial assistance. Dr. William Jaap and Mrs. Billie Chambers also read portions of the draft and offered suggestions for improvement.

Mrs. Jackie Williams provided the typing support, Ms. Diana Cordell the graphics and Ms. Suan Lee produced the final document.

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INTRODUCTION

The 1985-1986 attrition rate for Texas high schools was 33 percent. One in five Texas young people (nearly half a million) age 16 to 24 were not enrolled in school and had not completed the twelfth grade according to 1980 statistics. Three out of ten Texas dropouts--152,000 young people--had completed fewer than nine years of schooling when they left school. Thus, the number of young people who leave school each year lacking the skills that will qualify them for jobs is staggering.

An effort is being made to address this problem by focusing attention on dropout prevention but dropouts are only part of the problem. A parallel need exists for programs to help those who have already dropped out. Adult Basic Education Cooperatives have been established throughout the state to deal with this problem and there is an ongoing effort to develop innovative ways to serve more students with the present level of resources. This project addresses that effort and focuses on methods of linking with other agencies in the community to provide basic education to an even larger population of adults.

While the problems encountered in linking ABE with industry and community service organizations are not unique, there is enough of a difference in approach to warrant separate treatment. One of the major differences in the two programs is that industry, generally, will be seeking to accomplish more specific goals and will usually require a tailored curriculum while community service agencies will most likely be interested in the standard ABE Curriculum. Community service agencies may require special emphasis to deal with the learning disabled, blind, hearing impaired or other special groups, but essentially, the learning objectives will be the same as those of the standard ABE curriculum. In addition, it is more likely that community service agencies will make referrals to existing ABE classes rather than request separate class groups.

This manual will provide a model for linking Adult Basic Education programs--Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Education Development (GED), and English-as-a-Second Language (ESL)--with a broad range of human service agencies. The model graphically describes the steps in the linkage process and each of these steps are then discussed in detail in subsequent chapters of the manual. A general list of human services agencies is provided at Appendix A. This list is intended to assist administrators and teachers in focusing their efforts in areas which might be most productive. It certainly is not all inclusive.

The linkage model (Figure 1) depicts a process that is divided into three phases: Phase 1 concerns the decision ; Phase 2 concerns implementation; and Phase 3 concerns evaluation. Each phase incorporates several functions which will be subsequently discussed.

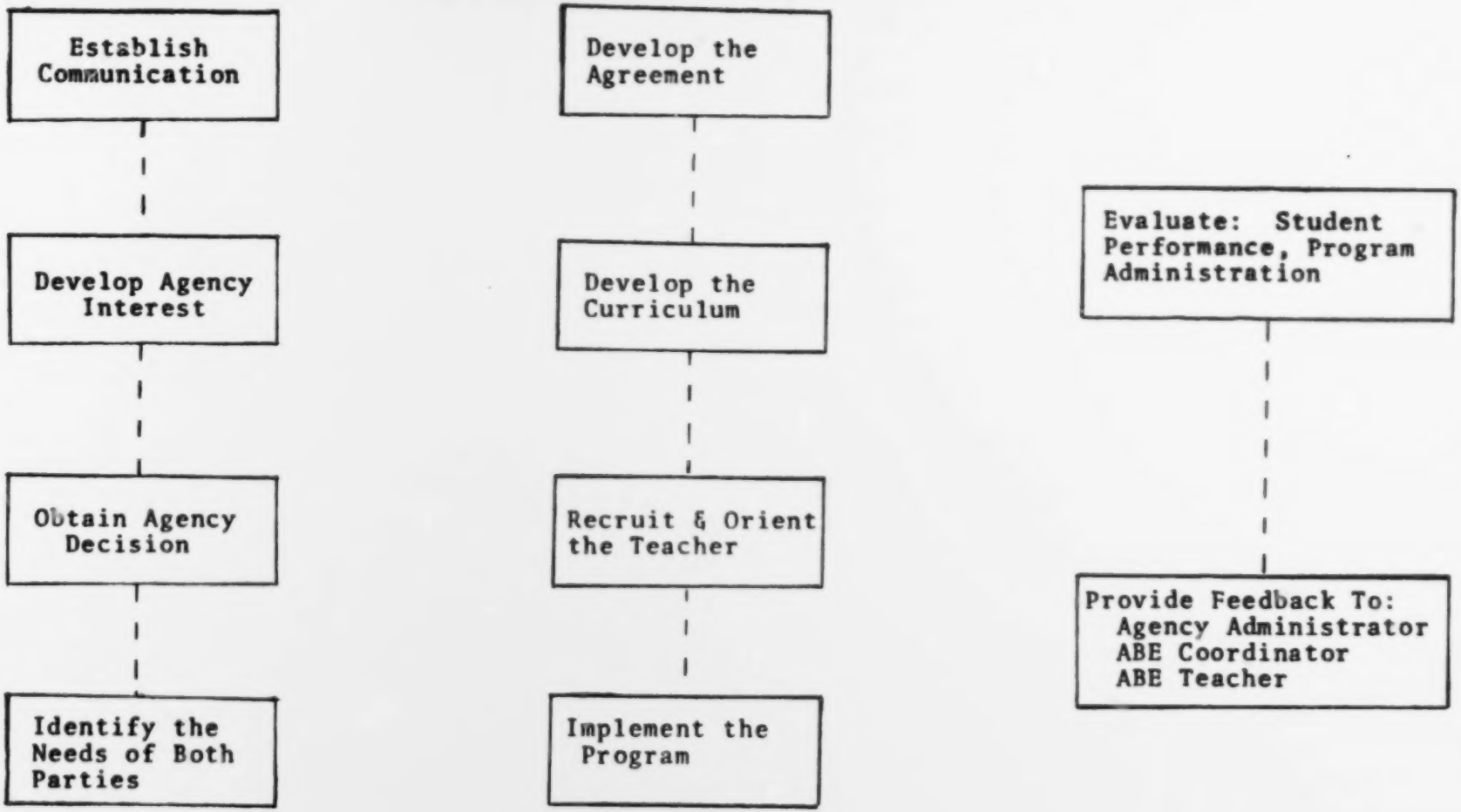

Figure 1. Model for ABE Linkage with Community-Based Agencies

CHAPTER 1

PHASE 1: DECISION

In the context of this manual the term linking is used to describe a situation wherein a community service organization cooperates with an educational institution to obtain or exchange services beneficial to both organizations and their clients. Establishing a relationship which is mutually beneficial is an essential aspect of linkage.

In order to develop such a relationship with community agencies, it will be necessary to establish a sound communications link with them. In many cases a link may already exist as a result of social contact and family or professional relations. These relationships may be used as a basis for obtaining the necessary entry to the agency and need not be very formal. Those relationships which do exist should be developed first. Later, with other organizations, it will be necessary to initiate contact. Generally, this will involve a more formal approach. The degree of formality will depend on the size of the organization and the accessability of the decision maker. A letter outlining the program and requesting an appointment would be an appropriate first step followed by a phone call to insure the letter was received. In most cases it will be best to allow the agency to set-up the appointment.

Once access to the organization has been gained, the objective will be to develop the agency's interest in the ABE program. This will depend, to some extent, on the presenter's communications skills and on how well the presentation is organized. It is

necessary to outline the program in a clear and concise manner. In some cases the presenter may be allotted a specific amount of time to make his/her point. For this reason it is advisable to prepare the remarks beforehand and to have a clear objective in mind. The ABE Director will be striving to achieve a favorable decision in a reasonably short time frame.

Once the decision has been made, it will then be necessary to identify the needs of the agency. The needs should be examined on several different levels. Initially, the concern will be with the educational needs of the students. What goals does the agency have in mind for the students? Are they interested in teaching basic skills, having the students obtain a GED or a high school diploma, or learning to speak English? Is there a need for pre-employment skills? Once this has been established a determination must be made concerning administration of the classes. Are there enough students to warrant establishing a separate class or will the agency be a source of referrals to an existing class?

If the agency is interested in a separate class, several points must be addressed. The following may be used as a guide:

a. Class location. Does the agency have a classroom that can be made available? If not, does the ABE program? If neither has, where can a classroom conveniently located be found?

b. Classroom materials. Are the appropriate instructional materials available? Will it be necessary to purchase additional materials? If so, funding sources must be examined.

c. Class periods and hours of instruction. If the agency has specific goals for the students, the agency may also visualize them being accomplished in a specific time frame. This will dictate the number of instructional hours which must be devoted to the students on a weekly basis. This, in turn, will lead to identifying daily hours and, subsequently, the development of a schedule.

d. Cost to the students. While it is not normally the practice to charge the students for attending classes, it may be desirable, under certain circumstances, to charge the student a nominal fee to defray the cost of workbooks or other consumable supplies. Another important consideration, if it is a GED class, is identifying who will pay for the cost of test administration and associated fees. This decision should be weighed carefully since it will impact on attendance. If the cost is too high (in certain communities any cost may be too high), the program will fail to attract students. On the other hand, some monetary investment in the program may motivate the student to stay with the program and place a higher value on it.

e. Suporting services. Certain community agencies provide services to their clients such as testing, skills training or job placement. Others may be able to provide such services as child care, transportation, or advertisement of the GED program. These points should be addressed and, if available, they should be incorporated into the program.

f. Counseling. As adult educators have learned, the majority of students require some educational counseling while preparing for their evaluation. It may take the form of "test-taking tips" or advice concerning test anxiety provided by the teacher. Alternatively, it may take the form of more formal testing, interpretation of results, and identification of goals provided by a trained staff counselor. This point should be examined while assessing the needs of the organization. If required, it then becomes a problem to identify assets--either a person presently on the staff or the funds necessary to hire one.

g. Funding. This point is addressed after the needs are identified. The satisfaction of some needs may dictate the expenditure of additional funds. These must be identified, their cost accurately assessed and a source of funds identified. If funds cannot be identified, then it becomes an exercise in identifying and deleting the least important items without destroying the integrity of the program.

Assessing the needs of the individual students will be determined by the teaching staff unless the agency specifically expresses a desire to participate in the assessment. In this case, specific instruments such as the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) should be recommended.

In summary, a linkage, to be successful, must benefit both parties; the community agency by providing a needed educational service and the ABE program by providing additional contact hours which, in turn, dictates future funding levels. To establish a linkage it is necessary to communicate with the agency and stimulate their interest in the services which can be made available to them. Once they are interested, they should be encouraged to participate; to make decisions to join in a cooperative venture with the GED program. The final step in this phase is to identify the needs of both organizations.

CHAPTER 2

PHASE 2: IMPLEMENTATION

During the implementation phase, there are four major actions which should take place. The first of these is to finalize the agreement. It is visualized that a great deal of the detail will have been addressed during the initial phase as the parties to the agreement identify and discuss the needs. Such details as classroom location, instructional materials, and teacher requirements will already have been examined. What remains is to document the points agreed upon.

The form which this agreement takes may be either informal or formal. In fact, the form may already be dictated by local policy; therefore, the ABE representative is advised to become familiar with the policy before finalizing any agreement. If the ABE program is administered by a school district or junior college, there may be a standard agreement format which addresses, in addition to the details unique to the project, such items as affirmative action and equal opportunity.

On the other hand, if the ABE representative has the option, he/she may choose to go with a less formal agreement such as a "Letter of Agreement." In this document the points of agreement may simply be listed and the document signed by both representatives.

The second major action is to develop the curriculum and identify the method of instruction. It is envisioned that students drawn from the various human services agencies in a community will

have needs which are addressed by the standard ABE programs (Adult Basic Education, Pre-GED Studies, English as a Second Language, and Pre-Employment Skills) and will not require a customized curriculum. The exception to this would be a pre-employment skills class which must take into consideration levels of skill, motivation, and employment goals. The content of such a class will obviously be different for a group of mentally retarded and a group undergoing drug and alcohol rehabilitation. The state has published an ABE curriculum guide which will provide a foundation for these programs. This guide is available through the Teacher Resource Education Dissemination System (TRENDS) and may be requested at no cost.

Another consideration is the identification of the Instructional method. To many people not directly involved in adult education, the focus is on mastery of academic subjects and grade level attainment - the traditional practices in educating children and young adults. Adult educators strive to develop methods more appropriate to the world of adults such as open entry/open exit and individualized instruction. These non-traditional methods can be a source of conflict if the agency is expecting a very traditional approach.

Teacher selection is the third major action in Phase 2 and is a critical step in the process. A great deal of the success or failure of the program will depend on the teacher. Such qualities as subject knowledge, interpersonal skills, reliability, experience and interest in one's work will be important factors in selecting a teacher. Normally the ABE program director will

have certain professional qualifications required for teachers. In addition, certain types of experiences will be relevant when dealing with special populations such as the retarded or learning disabled. Someone with experience or special training in dealing with these populations will contribute greatly to the success of the program.

Hiring the teacher will be the ABE administrator's responsibility, but it would be advisable to involve the agency in the decision. Their concurrence with the decision will help to set the tone for a cooperative venture which will contribute to long-range success.

Orientation of the teacher should be detailed, particularly if the agency being supported has stated a requirement for records or reports. Also, the orientation should be in addition to the teacher in-service training required annually by the State. A systematic approach encompassing as much detail as required to insure success is recommended. While this last statement may seem trite, it would not be possible to outline an orientation without knowing some of the specifics of the situation. This will require the judgement of an experienced ABE administrator.

Program implementation is the final major action of this phase and is the essence of the entire process. By developing a complete and well thought-out plan the implementation should progress smoothly. By leaving as few things to chance as possible, the instructors and administrators will have more freedom to deal with those problems which cannot be anticipated. They will

also have more time to plan, evaluate and to revise. They will be able to act rather than react.

CHAPTER 3

PHASE 3: EVALUATION

The evaluation phase encompasses two spheres of concern: student performance and program administration. Student performance will be measured by state standards in such areas as the GED test and the Competency Based High School Diploma Program. If one is working with a specified time frame, a 100% completion rate may not be practical. If that is the case, plans should be made to establish a base line against which student programs may be measured at the completion of the program. This will take some planning and will require additional resources to accommodate proctors, the cost of test booklets and answer sheets if a standardized test is to be used, provisions for grading, recording the results and, as a minimum, informing the students of the results.

This rationale also applies to the areas of ESL. A major difference with this program is that the evaluations will be more subjective and will in all probability be administered orally. The implications of subjectivity and investment of time should be considered when establishing evaluation criteria.

Care should be taken to avoid having unrealistic criteria used to judge the success of the program or criteria that cannot be objectively measured. This will lead to frustration on the part of everyone concerned.

Another aspect of the evaluation phase is to evaluate the program administration. This should be a cooperative effort involving the teacher, the ABE administrator and the agency administrator. Since this process may involve criticism, care must be taken to avoid confrontation with the agency. It is realistic to assume that any program which is implemented will have areas which will require, at the least, refinement. While it is desirable to maintain good working relations, this should not be achieved at the expense of the students. Improvements suggested in a tactful manner are essential to a successfully administered program. During the decision phase, at the point where both parties are identifying their needs, would seem to be a logical point to agree on a method of evaluation and the major points to be observed. Quite often there is a tendency to address problems as they arise and to consider such as feedback. It is, however, only a portion of the feedback. Feedback should include the positive along with the negative. An attempt should be made to balance the feedback.In a professionally run program one can expect that more things will be done correctly than incorrectly.

Decide who will present the evaluation of the organization and who should be present. It may be desirable to present certain negative comments directly to the individual concerned rather than to his/her supervisor or in front of a group.

Evaluation and feedback are closely linked and are continuous. Some points must be addressed immediately, others may be held for a final critique. This will depend on the approach of the administrators involved and the degree of structure they prefer to add to the process. As a minimum, the three parties - teacher, ABE administrator and the agency administrator - should exchange comments.

Finally, the results of the evaluated comments should be incorporated into the overall program. Emphasis is placed on the word "evaluated" since some points perceived as a problem from one perspective may represent a "best solution" from another.

Evaluation and feedback are continuous. Separation of the two is a technique used primarily to facilitate discussion. While some feedback will be provided periodically a formal critique session is recommended. Participants should be encouraged to exchange observation freely with the objective of improving the program.

APPENDIX

Appendix A

LINKAGE AGENCIES

The following list is general in nature and is intended to serve as a guide to Adult Education teachers and administrators throughout the state who are interested in linking with human service organizations as well as with industry. In some areas these organizations may already serve as a source of referrals; therefore, a line of communication exists. It is also likely that in some rural areas the population served by an agency may be too small to justify a separate class and continuing with a referral system will be necessary.

A. Public Libraries. These can represent a source of students as well as physical and administrative support. Libraries receiving federal funds are linked by federal regulations to all education efforts carried on in the community including adult basic education. Such linkage may not have been implemented in many communities.

B. Drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers. Programs are run by a variety of organizations; church, federal and state agencies and private organizations. Some of these programs incorporate training programs designed to help the participants grow intellectually and emotionally. In many cases ABE classes would complement the efforts of the rehabilitation staff to develop self-esteem as well as job skills in the clients.

C. Local jails. There is a need in some communities for an education program to serve those in jail. Several Co-ops have already established such programs nad have found them to be very productive.

D. Organizations which offer services to the handicapped. Human service agencies exist which provide help to the mentally retarded, blind, hearing impaired and learning disabled. Such agencies have a need for ABE classes as well as other forms of specialized training.

E. Organizations dealing with probationers and ex-public offenders. Quite often public offenders are released from prison into halfway houses where an attempt is made to help them to adjust to life in the community. ABE curricula can be structured to complement these adjustment efforts and to help individuals develop skills which will enhance their job potential.

F. Church organizations which offer human services. Generally, all types of church-sponsored social services can be found in the larger communities. Linkage with these organizations can be very productive both for the agencies and the individuals receiving the training.

G. Goodwill Industries. Among the services provided by this organization is training. Linkage with this organization is appropriate and offers the potential for being very productive. In addition to vocational training provided by this organization, ABE classes can complement their efforts.

H. State employment agencies. Linkage with this agency is appropriate and can provide an alternative in those cases where an individual has very few qualifications for employment. The training provided can cover a variety of ABE options from English-as-a-Second Language to basic reading and math to the GED certificate.